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SUBJECT: DALAI LAMA URGES US TO ADHERE TO HISTORIC U.S.
PRINCIPLES WHEN ENGAGING CHINA

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Steven White for Reasons 1.4 (B and D)

11. (C) Summary: In a March 30 meeting, the Charge d'Affaires solicited the Dalai Lama's views on the Tibet movement. This was the first meeting between a senior USG official and the Dalai Lama since March 10, the 50th anniversary of the Tibetan uprising and the Dalai Lama's escape to India in 11959. The Dalai Lama warmly thanked the USG for its consistent Tibet policy, expressed his view that it is in everyone's interest to see China become a more democratic and transparent society, and counseled the USG to remain faithful to historic U.S. principles of liberty and democracy while engaging with the Chinese government. End Summary.

China in Transition

12. (C) A March 30 meeting with the Charge was the Dalai Lama's first with a senior USG official since the March 10 anniversary of the failed Tibetan uprising and the Dalai Lama's escape to India in 1959. The Dalai Lama stated that the anniversary passed more peacefully this year than in 2008, but noted the disturbing acts of despair this year---the self-immolation of a Tibetan monk in February and the suicide of another monk who jumped into a river after escaping from a Chinese prison in March. (Note: For the first time, the Chinese government celebrated March 28 as "Serfs' Emancipation Day" to mark the 50th anniversary of the Communist forces taking control over Tibet. End Note.)

13. (C) The Dalai Lama observed the positive changes in China, stressing the growth of the middle class and the availability of modern technology to average Chinese to access information. He specifically mentioned that there were over 300 articles in the Chinese press since the Tibet riots of March 2008 and emphasized that many articles were positive on the Tibet issue and the Middle Way approach adopted by the Tibet government-in-exile, and were critical of Beijing's policy. The Dalai Lama viewed this as a sign of progress in China, but found it difficult to understand the mindset of Communist hardliners whose thinking is "illogical and abnormal." The Chinese government, he noted, expends tremendous effort distorting information in an attempt to look strong to other nations, when they instead should be permitting journalists and tourists to freely visit Tibet so trust can be built between China and the outside world.

14. (C) Asked whether the Chinese government would relax its control as a new generation takes root in China, the Dalai Lama described China's transition from the Mao era when ideology was preeminent to the present period when financial

gain--illustrated by the newly influential affluent and middle classes---is more important. President Hu Jintao now repeatedly stresses the importance of a harmonious society. According to the Dalai Lama, the shift in emphasis by the top leadership demonstrates the Chinese Communist Party's ability to adapt to reality. Trust, freedom of speech, and an independent judiciary are necessary to build a harmonious society. The Tibetan leader pointed to India, another billion-plus nation, as an example of a country where numerous diverse views are accommodated.

Hold Firmly to Your Principles

15. (C) The Dalai Lama expressed support for President Obama's flexible approach, complimenting his willingness to engage in dialogue with Iran. Contending that freedom of expression, liberty, and democracy are far more important than economic and military might, he despaired at the Government of South Africa's decision to choose economic and financial interests over principle by refusing to grant him a visa. (Note: The Dalai Lama was denied a visa on March 23 to attend a peace conference. The conference was postponed after other Nobel Laureates protested the decision by withdrawing from attendance. End Note.) The Tibetan leader strongly urged President Obama to hold firmly to traditional U.S. principles of liberty and freedom when engaging with the Chinese government.

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